

applause or affection than conscience all the while pronounces ? It is obvious then that a man whose sentiments and designs, or the undisclosed parts of whose conduct, have been deeply criminal, must keep his record sacred to himself; unless he feels such an unsupportable longing to relieve his heart by confiding its painful consciousness, that he can be content to hold the regard of his friend on the strength of his penitence and recovered virtue. As to those, whose memory of the past is sullied by shades if not by stains, they must either in the same manner retain the delineation for solitary use, or limit themselves in writing it, to a deliberate and strong expression of the *measure* of conscious culpabilities, and their effect in the general character, with a certain, not deceptive but partially reserved explanation, that shall equally avoid particularity and mystery; or else they must consent to meet their friends, who share the human frailty and have had their deviations, on terms of mutual ingenuous acknowledgment. In this confidential communication, each will learn to behold the other's transgressions fully as much in that light in which they certainly are infelicities to be commiserated, as in that in which they are also faults or vices to be condemned; while both earnestly endeavour to improve by their remembered errors. But I shall find myself in danger of becoming ridiculous, amidst these scruples about an entire ingenuousness to a confidential friend or two, while I glance into the literary world, and observe the number of historians of their own lives, who magnanimously throw the complete cargo, both of their vanities and their vices, before the whole public. Men who can gaily laugh at themselves for ever having ever* pretended to goodness; who can tell of having sought consolation for the sorrows of bereaved tenderness, in the recesses of debauchery; whose language betrays that they deem a spirited course of profligate adventures a much finer thing than the stupidity of vulgar virtues, and who seem to claim the sentiments with which we regard an unfortunate hero, for the disasters into which these adventures led them; venal partisans whose talents would hardly have been bought, if their venom had not made up the deficiency; profane travelling coxcombs ; players, and the makers of immoral plays—all can narrate the course of a contaminated life with the most ingenuous hardihood. Even courtezans, grieved